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11 August 1953

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Memorandum to the DDI entitled "Request for Approval of
Research Project on Soviet Linguistics"

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1. It is my belief that this general subject is so far as its intelligence value is concerned has already been competently treated in several places. For example I am reasonably certain that I have seen a rather competent job done by the Department of State on the recent linguistics controversy. The files of the "Current Digest of the Soviet Press" reflect that this publication has given extensive coverage to the subject since 1948.

2. With regard to the purposes which would be served by the project:
a) the relation of language to Soviet propaganda has already been thoroughly treated by several social scientists as well as by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and other Communist authors b) a study of linguistics in order to "throw much light on" Soviet attitudes and policies toward minority groups seems like a "back door" approach to this problem since there are several more direct methods of approach.

3. I find the conclusion of this proposal somewhat disquieting. To say that "such a study requires a very rare and peculiar combination of talents which is certainly not available in the government" is a sweeping statement indeed. If the Deputy Director of Intelligence to whom the subject memorandum is addressed believes it to be a true statement then something is radically wrong with the personnel procurement policies of CIA and other pertinent government agencies particularly the Department of State.

4. I note also that this project is to be pursued on a "part-time" basis which carries certain unfavorable implications.

5. As a matter of record there has been some previous discussion among Indications Staff personnel of a problem which is related to this general subject. It has to do with establishing a dictionary of the more common phrases or words currently employed in Soviet propaganda, particularly in "vigilance" literature, in an attempt to determine the actual meaning that the Communists give to these terms, whether this meaning is constant, and whether the meaning for one word is synonymous with the meaning for another similar word or conveys a slightly different meaning. It was felt that a project of this sort as well as most projects pertaining to Soviet propaganda might be best handled by the special projects staffs of FBIS.

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6. The foregoing is not intended to convey the meaning that such a study would not find readers in the intelligence community but rather that OGI should not expend or voice approval of the expenditure of [] for a project on this nature when there are so many other projects yet undone of more overriding interest.

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7. As a positive recommendation bearing on the general problem of research work on Soviet propaganda, we have in the past proposed a blending of the facilities of FBIS and FDD into one unit, staffed by competent experts and available for systematic, continuing studies of Soviet propaganda as well as various peel off projects of a current intelligence nature.

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